

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1842
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 16783

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV BQG
SUBJECT: UK CONCERN ABOUT PLANNED PARTY CONGRESSES
IN BERLIN

SUMMARY. THE BRITISH HAVE RAISED IN THE BONN GROUP THE QUESTION OF THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNENESS OF THE DECISION OF THE SPD AND FDP TO HOLD NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESSES IN BERLIN IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1980 ELECTIONS, JUDGING SUCH CONGRESSES TO BE A PROVOCATION TO THE SOVIETS. WE DO NOT SHARE THE BRITISH EAGERNESS TO ADVISE AGAINST THIS AND CERTAIN OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE BERLIN/FRG TIES ON THE SOLE GROUND THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT CONSIDER THEM PROVOCATIVE. WE PROPOSE TO CONFINE OURSELVES IN THE BONN GROUP TO SAYING THAT OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE UNHAPPY ABOUT THE HOLDING OF THE CONGRESSES AND WILL PROBABLY PROTEST. HOWEVER, WE ASSUME THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE TAKEN THIS INTO ACCOUNT AND THAT
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WE REGARD THE DECISION ON THE SITE OF THE CONGRESSES A MATTER FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES THEMSELVES TO DECIDE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE SEPTEMBER 6 BONN GROUP MEETING, THE FRG REP (VON BRAUNMUEHL) INFORMED US THAT PRESIDENT SCHEEL WILL INAUGURATE THE NEW INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS CENTER IN

BERLIN ON APRIL 2, 1979.

2. AT THE END OF THE MEETING, THE UK REP (EYERS) USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF PLANNED FDP AND SPD NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESSES IN BERLIN, BOTH OF WHICH PARTIES HAVE BOOKED THE CONGRESS CENTER IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1980 ELECTIONS. EYERS ASKED WHETHER THIS MAKES EITHER POLITICAL OR COMMERCIAL SENSE AND ASKED THE FRG REP (VON BRAUNMUEHL) WHETHER ANY PURPOSE WOULD BE SERVED BY PUTTING FORTH THE CONCERNS MORE FORMALLY.

3. VON BRAUNMUEHL SAID THAT ALL QUESTIONS OF THIS SORT ARE AN APPROPRIATE SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION UNDER THE RUBRIC OF "POLITICAL OPPORTUNENESS."

4. EYERS SAID THAT THE FCO QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WOULD BE A POLITICALLY WELCOME PROSPECT FOR THE MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN BERLIN AND SAID THAT THERE WAS SOME RISK, IF THE PARTY CONGRESSES WERE TO BE HELD IN THE CONGRESS CENTER, THAT THE CENTER WOULD BE BLACKLISTED BY EAST EUROPEANS WHO WOULD NOT BOOK THERE. EYERS SAID THAT THE LAST NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS HELD IN BERLIN WAS IN 1968, WELL PRIOR TO THE QA. HE SAID THAT THE FCO'S VIEW IS THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD REGARD THIS AS "A PROVOCATION IN THE EXTREME" AND THAT THE CONFERENCES SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL THE CENTER IS IN OPERATION FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO OR THREE YEARS, DURING WHICH THE CONGRESS WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ESTABLISHED.

5. EYERS ASKED FOR OTHER ALLIED VIEWS ON THE MATTER AND THE FRENCH REP (LASSUS) SUPPORTED HIM WHILE THE US

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REP DECLINED TO EXPRESS A VIEW.

6. VON BRAUNMUEHL HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT HE BELIEVES IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO GET THE PARTIES TO CANCEL THE BOOKINGS WITHOUT MORE REASON THAN THAT IT WOULD BE PROVOCATIVE TO THE SOVIETS AND SAID THAT ONE OF THE THINGS THE SOVIETS SOUGHT TO OBTAIN (UNSUCCESSFULLY) IN THE QA NEGOTIATIONS WAS A BAN ON SUCH CONGRESSES. HE ALSO EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE SOVIET REACTION WOULD BE MUTED SINCE FOR SOVIETS TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD ONLY FORCE THE PARTIES INVOLVED TO TAKE A HARDER ANTI-SOVIET LINE IN THE 1980 ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IN ANY CASE, THE SOVIETS KNEW THE CDU/CSU WOULD PROBABLY BENEFIT FROM ANY SOVIET ATTACK ON THE CONGRESSES BEING HELD IN BERLIN.

7. COMMENT: THE MATTER WAS RAISED BY EYERS WITH THE FRENCH AND US SOME TIME AGO, BASED ON AN INQUIRY BY BERLIN MAYOR LUEDER TO THE UK MINISTER IN BERLIN AS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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HOW THE ALLIES WOULD VIEW SUCH CONGRESSES. THE SUBJECT WAS ALSO DISCUSSED BY THE THREE MISSIONS IN BERLIN. THE IMMEDIATE BRITISH VIEW AT THAT TIME WAS THAT THE HOLDING OF THE CONGRESSES WAS UNWISE BECAUSE OF THE LIKELY SOVIET REACTION. THE BRITISH HAVE NOT RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT HERE, NOR TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAVE THEY IN BERLIN. WE HAD ASSUMED THEY HAD DECIDED TO DROP THE MATTER IN VIEW OF THE VERY STRONG LIKELIHOOD (WHICH EYERS ADMITS) THAT THE PARTIES WOULD NOT REVERSE THEIR DECISION.

8. THE BRITISH HAVE, IN RECENT MONTHS AT LEAST, EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO A VARIETY OF MEETINGS AND OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF THE POLITICAL TIES BETWEEN BERLIN AND THE

FRG (E.G., MEETINGS OF THE LANDTAG IN BERLIN), ON THE GROUND THAT THEY WERE UNNECESSARY AND PROVOCATIVE TO THE SOVIETS. WHILE JUDGMENTS MUST BE MADE BASED ON THE FACTS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES, OUR VIEW IN THIS CASE IS THAT WE SHOULD NOT SEEK TO SUBSTITUTE OUR JUDGMENT FOR THAT OF THE SPD AND FDP AS TO WHETHER THEY SHOULD HOLD THEIR CONGRESSES IN BERLIN, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS APPEAR MINIMAL. TO DO OTHERWISE MIGHT BRING OUR OWN RESOLVE TO DEFEND THE TIES BETWEEN BERLIN AND THE FRG INTO PUBLIC QUESTION, SINCE THERE IS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT OUR POSITION WOULD BECOME PUBLICLY KNOWN.

9. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, AS A PRACTICE WHICH PRECEDES THE QA, THE FDP AND SPD BUNDESTAG CAUCUSES MEET (SEPARATELY) ONCE A YEAR IN BERLIN AND THE CDU/CSU CAUCUS MEETS ABOUT TWICE A YEAR IN BERLIN. IN ADDITION, THE CDU HELD A "FORUM" TO DISCUSS A DRAFT OF THE PARTY'S BASIC PROGRAM IN SEPTEMBER, 1977 AND THE FDP STEERING

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COMMITTEE, THE NATIONAL GROUP WHICH MEETS BETWEEN THE PARTY CONGRESSES, MET IN BERLIN IN FEBRUARY, 1975.

10. UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO THE CONTRARY, WE WILL CONFINE OURSELVES IN THE BONN GROUP TO SAYING THAT OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE UNHAPPY ABOUT THE HOLDING OF THE CONGRESSES AND WILL PROBABLY PROTEST. HOWEVER, WE ASSUME THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE TAKEN THIS INTO ACCOUNT AND THAT WE REGARD THE DECISION ON THE SITE OF THE CONGRESSES AS A MATTER FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES THEMSELVES TO DECIDE.
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